

NSC BRIEFING

JAPAN

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I. The political crisis now centers on the intense power struggle in the conservative ruling Liberal Democratic Party to select Kishi's successor.

A. Ikeda, (no accent) minister of international trade and industry and a protege of former Prime Minister Yoshida (Yo-shee-da, no accent) is the leading contender, but still cannot command the support needed to hold the party together.

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B. All present contenders for Kishi's mantle are considered friendly to the US,

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II. If Ikeda fails in his bid to succeed Kishi at this time, prospects are that a compromise candidate will take over for the interim period before elections.

A. Leading candidates are Ono (Oh-no), vice president of the party and long-time political boss, and Ishii (E-shee), a party elder who accompanied Kishi on his visit to Washington to sign the new security treaty last January.

B. The conservatives are almost certain to meet public expectations for an early dissolution of the Diet and for general elections.

III. Government leaders are thinking of holding such elections in the late fall,

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25 YEAR
RE-REVIEW

SECRET

A. Kishi's readiness to resign has removed the primary focal point of popular dissatisfaction, [REDACTED]

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B. Nevertheless, the Socialists have vowed to oppose any conservative candidate for prime minister who was actively involved in the move to ratify the treaty.

C. The Socialists are, however, willing to strike a deal to elect as prime minister a dissident conservative, who might possibly include some Socialists in a coalition cabinet.

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IV. There are several continuing dangers, inherent in the Japanese political scene.

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- V. The interim government which will succeed Kishi in the next few weeks will be weaker and less decisive than the Kishi government, particularly if either Ono or Ishii is selected as prime minister.
- A. After the general election, likely to be held this fall, the composition of the government then formed will be dependent upon political factors and developments we cannot clearly forecast now.

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- VI. The crisis has crystallized neutralist sentiment in Japan.
- A. Anti-Americanism displayed by the leftists is largely related to the association of the unpopular Kishi with the security treaty.
1. A mid-June public opinion poll indicated the US was still the highest of any country in public esteem.

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